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MEMORANDUM FOR: C/FI

SUBJECT: CIA Participation in "Grass Roots" Political Reporting

1. Returned herewith is what I take to be the latest draft of the proposed memorandum of understanding between State and ourselves on the subject of grass roots political reporting. I have examined this memorandum with care and while I feel that it is in many respects satisfactory and bears evidence of much careful thought and hard work, there are a few aspects which continue to give me trouble and a number of questions which I should like to raise. Also -- and although I should not like to propose additional steps which would unduly delay the conclusion of this exercise -- it seems to me that in view of the considerable amount of time which has already been consumed in the development of the paper from its inception, it would be better to take the small additional amount of time and effort necessary to answer the questions and make any desirable refinements than to close the matter out now in the interest of speed. My concern here is, obviously, that we will probably have to live with this paper for a long time once it has been completed and agreed to by both parties.

2. At the outset and in the interest of setting the record straight, I should like to make it clear that neither I nor Mr. Gordon Stewart are primarily responsible for proposing this agreement

While I am not opposed to our taking on a certain amount of work of the sort which is involved and which is outside the scope of our normal responsibilities, and on the contrary feel that we should do what we can in cases where the national interest would clearly be served and in circumstances where we can be of real assistance to the State Department without undue prejudice to our own major responsibilities, I should like to point out that the proposal originated at a higher level than my own and had its inception in an NSC discussion in which the Director participated.

3. It is not clear to me why the major emphasis is placed upon an understanding or arrangement as between the State Department and this Agency in connection with the provision of assistance to the State Department in the field of overt political reporting. It would seem to me that other departments and agencies are at least as well situated as CIA to make a contribution in this field, and that certain of them -- most notably USIA -- may be better situated and qualified. In fact USIA has in the past engaged itself rather extensively in the obtainment of public opinion

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polls and sampling in order to get a better focus on what its targets should be and to learn what may be the most critical issues affecting public opinion and political thought. By the relatively simple devices of scheduling public opinion sampling projects during political campaigns or shortly prior to elections, and by adding or shaping a few questions, USIA should be able to make a major contribution with a minimum of new effort and expense and without expending substantially increased amounts of time and effort on the part of its own personnel overseas. It is noted that in the present draft the capabilities and possible contributions of USIA, ICA and the military attaches, are recognized and taken into account to some extent, but unless it is proposed that there shall be similar agreements as between State and those other departments and agencies, my question would still stand.

4. As you may know, the Director has been drafting a proposed memorandum to the State Department on the general subject of political reporting which was incomplete at the time of his recent departure for Europe. Although I have not seen this draft, I have heard him discuss it a number of times and it has occurred to me that this draft should be examined by you in order to determine whether it contains any views or recommendations which may be either contrary or supplemental to the contents of your draft. I believe that Mr. [redacted] should be able to make the Director's latest draft available for your examination, and even though it may not address itself to the precise subject of "grass roots reporting" it may bear upon this question, at least indirectly.

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5. I share your concern about the wording of subparagraph 3 on page 11, as this seems to me, even in its redrafted form, to be susceptible of the interpretation that the CIA station chief will, upon the request of a chief of mission, put every asset he has on the job of overt collection and reporting. Accordingly, I would suggest that some such language as the following be substituted for the following language in the 4th line of this subparagraph "every asset he has for any type of collection":

"Such assets as he has which are adaptable to this type of collection * * *."

6. In paragraph 2b of the Recommendations, I would recommend the addition of language providing for the receipt from the other departments and agencies having capabilities of a general statement of such capabilities as they may have in the area designated as critical.

(S) FRANK G. WISNER

FRANK G. WISNER
Deputy Director (Plans)

Attachment

cc: ADCI
DDCI